



**Office of the Attorney General
Paul G. Summers**

**Department of Commerce and Insurance
Commissioner Paula Flowers**

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL SUES CALIFORNIA COMPANY AND NASHVILLE
RESIDENTS FOR ALLEGED UNAUTHORIZED PRACTICE OF LAW**

The State of Tennessee has filed a lawsuit against California-based We The People Forms and Service Centers USA, Inc. and its local franchise owners for violating Tennessee's unauthorized practice of law statutes and violation of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act.

The suit, filed this week, alleges We The People and Vincent and Shannon Gould doing business as We The People Forms and Service Center of Nashville have engaged in the unauthorized practice of law and are violating the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act by advertising to provide legal services, giving legal advice and preparing a variety of legal documents.

The complaint alleges that the Goulds and We The People prepared legal documents, including bankruptcy and divorce petitions, for consumers to file in court. The State asserts that at no time did the Goulds, any of their employees, or any of the We the People document preparers have a license to practice law in Tennessee. The State also alleges that both the Goulds and We The People engaged in the unauthorized practice of law by drafting legal documents without a license to practice law and by giving consumers the false impression that they could represent themselves on these matters on essentially a risk-free basis.

According to the State's Complaint, the Goulds and We The People advertised in Middle Tennessee via ads placed in the Thrifty Nickel, a Tennessean insert, Yellow Pages, mail circulars, on Graffiti Indoor commercial bathroom stalls, on Metropolitan Transit Authority bus benches, and by television commercials. The suit alleges these advertisements solicited clients for legal services that the State alleges the Goulds and We the People cannot legally provide in Tennessee. The State contends that making misleading statements to secure clients is deceptive and unfair to consumers and violates the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act and the Unauthorized Practice and Improper Conduct statute. The State is asking the court to stop the defendants from engaging in the alleged unlawful conduct, to provide restitution to consumers, to assess civil penalties, and other relief.

"Generally speaking, consumers may represent themselves in legal matters and may receive certain kinds of assistance," Tennessee Attorney General Paul G. Summers said, "The problem occurs when advertising creates a misleading impression of the risks associated with consumers attempting to represent themselves and/or when representatives of these type companies engage in conduct that constitutes the unauthorized practice of law. Consumers need to know there are specific risks associated with representing themselves in legal matters and there are resources available for gathering information to make an informed decision."

Mary Clement, Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs adds, "Consumers should be careful about giving money to companies that advertise that they can assist consumers with legal matters without the advice and assistance of lawyers. These companies could be engaged in a perfectly legal business or they could be engaged in deceptive advertising, the unauthorized practice of law or other unfair and deceptive practices which may leave consumers unprotected in their legal matters. Also, these companies may not fully disclose to consumers that some judges have rejected their documents because of concerns about their legality."

If you decide to seek legal advice and do not know a lawyer, get recommendations from friends, co-workers or family members. Another alternative is a Lawyer Referral Service. State and local bar associations offer this service and you can schedule a consultation with a lawyer in your area. Referral services are available in East Tennessee: (865) 522-7501; Middle or West Tennessee: (615) 242-6456; and Southeast Tennessee: (423) 756-3222.

Although it is not known how many Tennessee consumers used the services of the Goulds and We The People, the company has been in operation since April, 2003. If you have any complaints about Vincent Gould, Shannon Gould, or We the People Forms and Service Centers USA, Inc., please contact the Attorney General's Office at (615) 741-1671 or 1-877-275-7396.